

# Yemaya

No. 9

ICSF'S NEWSLETTER ON GENDER AND FISHERIES

APRIL 2002

## From the Editor

Dear friends,

Greetings from ICSF!

This issue has articles from Pakistan, France, Chile and Thailand. The article from Pakistan describes the manner in which women's work in the fisheries sector has gradually reduced over time as a result of various developments—a familiar pattern in many parts of the world. Interestingly, the author highlights the fact that women of fishing communities have traditionally enjoyed greater freedom and status than have women of agrarian communities. This seems to be the reality in many parts of the world, and is a certainly an issue worth exploring more.

The write-up from France describes vividly the way in which the work of women of fishing households is trivialized, and they are made the butt of jokes, in an effort to maintain class distinctions. The report from Chile highlights problems of workers in salmon processing plants in Chile.

And finally, we carry a report of a workshop, held in Thailand, which brought together fishworker organizations and NGOs from the Asian region. Participants met to discuss the impact of globalization processes on their lives and fisheries, and, in this context, to evolve strategies on ways to protect their



## Inside Pages

Pakistan.....	2
Thailand.....	3
Chile.....	5
France.....	6
Canada.....	8
Australia.....	9
United States.....	10
Asia.....	10
ICSF resources...	10,12

life and livelihood interests. The extent to which the meeting could take into account the concerns of women fishworkers is discussed.

In this issue of *Yemaya* we have compiled, for the first time, information on women in the fisheries sector available at ICSF's Documentation Centre (DC). Gender and fisheries is one of the priority themes in DC and, in this issue, we discuss some of the information available with us, and describe how it can be searched and accessed over the net.

A web search on the theme of women in fisheries took us to some interesting websites and we carry information from these. Not surprisingly, it was more difficult to come by information on women in fisheries in countries of the South, even though women are known to play vital roles in the fisheries of these countries. We hope to continue compiling information of relevant websites in future issues of *Yemaya*. In case you know of websites and web resources dealing with women and fisheries, do let us know.

The next issue of *Yemaya* will be brought out in July 2002 and we request you to send us your write-ups and views by 15 May 2002. *Yemaya* is to enter the double digits in June, and we would like to seek your feedback on its relevance for your work, if any.

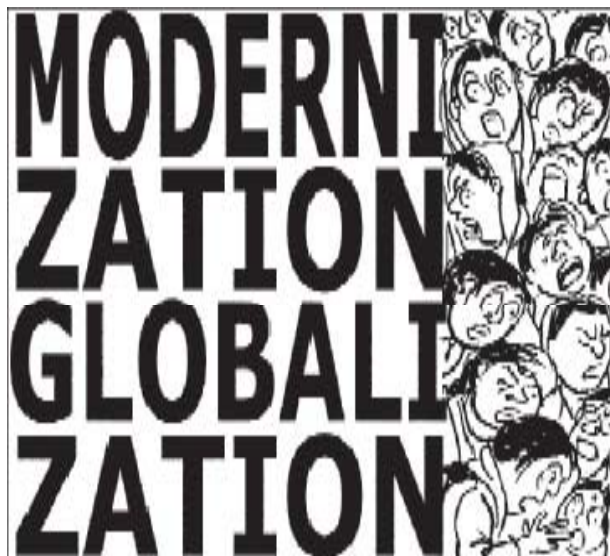
**Asia/ Pakistan****A bleak future**

*Women of fishing communities in Pakistan face increasing marginalization*

**By Mohammad Ali Shah of the Pakistan Fisherfolk Forum (PFF)**

In Pakistan, fishing communities are considerably more liberal than their agrarian counterparts. In earlier times communal property was the norm and personal property was almost unheard of in fishing communities. There was no gender discrimination and women were the virtual heads of the family, responsible for distributing the harvest. Unlike in other rural communities, there was no 'veil system', and women enjoyed a lot of freedom.

As men spent more time fishing, women had a greater role in family matters and in dealing with problems of the family. In fact several women of fishing communities developed reputations of being the chief of not only the family but also of the locality or caste group. People, including men, were identified by the names of their mothers, not their fathers—a practice that still continues in fishing communities. Similarly, some caste groups engaged in fisheries are also named after women. Even Karachi—the metropolitan coastal city of Pakistan and the provincial headquarter of Sindh province—was named after a woman called Mai Kalochi, who was the chieftain of this small fishing village of earlier times. It is said that she herself used to run the fishing business and engage in other trade.



Presently, however, two trends can be discerned. While traditional fishing communities still tends to be

liberal *vis-à-vis* women, this is not the case with the large number of agricultural communities who now derive their livelihood from the fisheries, following their displacement from agricultural activities in the Indus deltaic area. Agricultural societies have usually been rigid with regard to the accepted roles of women. Women tend to be considered as a commodity whose ownership rests with the male and are often confined within the four-walls of the house in the name of morality and decency. Many of these values have now also been transmitted to fishing communities.

*Women in fishing*

In the past the women often accompanied their male family members on fishing trips. There was no major division of work. The fishermen would take the entire family to fishing trips to remote islands, where they would all engage in fishing as well as in cleaning and drying fish. In the case of big nets men and women would jointly throw the net in the water and pull it back. Back in the village women would sell the fish in local as well as in distant markets while the men would continue to fish.

In cases where men left for longer fishing trips of ten to twenty days, women would stay home and continue to fish on a smaller scale in shallow coastal waters. In the coastal regions of Sindh province, women fished with nets in creeks off the coast. However, with the commercialization of fisheries and the entry of outsiders (non-indigenous fishermen) into the fisheries, women were gradually pushed out of fishing activities. With the industrialization process, fishing no longer remains a family-based activity in Pakistan and the role of women of fishing communities within the family unit has almost come to an end.

*Women as net weavers*

In the sub-continent women of pre-historic times are said to have been the architects of fishing nets, baskets, etc. The earliest nets were made of fibre collected from the jungle. Cotton thread was introduced at a later stage. Even after women of fishing communities more or less withdrew from active fishing and focused more on the home, they continued to make fishing nets.

This brought in a steady income. Women who wove nets were paid for it, even within their own families. Women earned a stable and regular, if modest, income. Earnings depended on the complexity, strength, and weight of the net. When nets were made exclusively of cotton thread, women earned between Rs 5 to 10 per day. The currency then had a very high purchasing power. Income was steady, as work was always

available. Buyers of fishing nets gave work to women on a piecemeal basis. Many sections of nets were then pieced together to make a larger net.

However, after the late 1960s, processes of modernization began to affect women net-weavers adversely, ousting them from this profession in the same way as they were ousted from fishing activities. This began with the import of nylon nets into Pakistan. Later factories were set up in Karachi for the manufacture of nylon fishing nets. These nets quickly started replacing the traditional cotton nets, and, as a result, the demand for cotton nets started dwindling, depriving a large number of women net weavers from this source of their livelihood. The governments of the time never gave it a thought or even considered creating alternative means of income for the affected women.

By the early 1970s women had effectively been thrown out of the net weaving business. Today few of the present generation have any memories of their womenfolk working as skilled, paid craftswomen fashioning fine fishing nets. The impacts of the nylon net on fishing communities are multidimensional. Women have been particularly adversely affected as this income-earning activity came to a standstill.

#### *Post-harvest activities*

Women have always been involved with post-harvest activities such as drying and cleaning fish. Women have also been working in fishmeal plants, producing fishmeal or powder sold to poultry farms. They have been involved in processing crabs for export. Crabs are caught from the foot of the mangroves and are kept in baskets covered with mangrove leaves, till they are processed. This involves boiling them, extracting the meat, putting this into plastic bags in ice. Women would extract the meat while the men would fill the bags for freezing.

However, jobs of local women in fish processing factories and fish cleaning sheds have been taken over by the arrival of illegal immigrants from Bangladesh and Burma. Desperate for work, the immigrants are even willing to work for half the wage, outside the terms of formal employment. Illegal immigrants who have settled along the coastal areas of Karachi have thus affected the earnings of women of local fishing communities.

#### *The role of the government*

With the decline in their economic roles within the fisheries, the status and clout of women of fishing

communities has decreased. Women no longer manage the business as they once did. A very small number of local women are involved in peeling shrimps, weaving nets, making fish baskets, etc. as wage labourers. Their economic condition has deteriorated and poverty has become endemic.

The government has pursued no policies or programmes to improve the socio-economic condition of women of fishing communities. The complete lack of acknowledgement of the role of women in the fisheries sector can be judged from the fact that women of fishing communities have not found even a single mention in government policy documents, laws and rules etc. The Handbook of Fisheries Statistics of Pakistan—the annual publication of Pakistan's Marine Fisheries Department last published in 1993—for example, has no mention of women, even though it carries a full chapter on the fishermen population.

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## **Asia/ Thailand**

### **Coming together**

*A recent meet in Thailand focused on Asian fisheries in the era of globalization*

**By Chandrika Sharma of ICSF's Chennai office**

Millions of people in Asia depend on fisheries for a living, making it a critical component of economic growth and a major source of food security in the region. According to FAO estimates 84 per cent of the world's fishers were concentrated in Asia—9 million in China, nearly 6 million in India, and 4 million in Vietnam, Indonesia, Bangladesh and the Philippines taken together. The majority are small-scale, artisanal fishers, eking out a living from coastal and inshore resources. A conservative estimate would place the total number of people involved in fishing, processing, trading and other fisheries-related activities in Asia at about 120 million. For artisanal fishing communities, fishing is a source of livelihood as well as a culture and a way of life.

Asian fisheries have, however, witnessed major changes in the past few decades, as governments have sought to modernize the sector by bringing in more efficient gear and technologies, including bottom-trawling and purse-seining. The focus on expanding production and exports has received an impetus in the current phase of globalization.

It was to discuss these developments and their implications for the small-scale marine and inland fisheries sector that representatives of fisherfolk and peasant organizations as well as NGOs from 11 countries in Asia met from 25 to 29 January 2002 at Prince of Songkhla University, Hat Yai, Thailand for the *Asian Fisherfolk Conference: Cut Away the Net of Globalization*.

Representatives from the following countries were present: Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Vietnam, along with representatives from the World Forum of Fisher Peoples (WFFP) and those from Aotearoa-New Zealand and South Africa.

The conference was organized with the following objectives:

- to analyze the impact of globalization, specifically liberalization, privatization and deregulation, on the small-scale fisheries sector;
- to document initiatives and gains by Asian fisherfolk to improve their situation, such as, but not limited to, organizing, peoples' campaigns, advocacy, resource management and lobbying;
- to learn about the role and situation of women in the fisheries sector; and
- to consolidate networks among fisherfolk organizations in the Asian region.

The workshop was a joint initiative of several organizations. These included the Federation of Fisherfolk of Thailand, the Sustainable Development Foundation (SDF), the Foundation for Sustainable Agriculture (FSA), NGO-COD, the World Wide Fund for Nature, the Andaman Project, the Prince of Songkhla University and the Waliluk University—all from Thailand, as well as PAMALAKAYA (the National Federation of Fisherfolk Organizations in the Philippines), the International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (ICSF) and the Asia-Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development (APWLD).

Participants felt that globalization processes lead to a loss of income and livelihood, dislocation from fishing grounds, denial of access rights, breakup of communities, social problems, loss of traditional systems of knowledge and wisdom, degradation and destruction of aquatic resources and violations of human rights. The pressure on women of fishing communities has increased in specific ways, translating directly into increased workloads, stress and pressure

to earn higher incomes. Participants called for a reversal of laws, programmes and policies as well as the dismantling of institutions of globalization that are primarily attuned to the interests of powerful economic players and that marginalize fishing communities.

One of the objectives of the meeting was to understand better the situation of women of fishing communities in Asia. For a start, the effort was to ensure that there was equal representation of women from fishworker organizations at the meeting. However, this was not possible in all cases. In several countries of the region efforts of fishworkers to organize are relatively recent. Even where fisherfolk have organized, women often do not participate actively within the organization. As a consequence, there were fewer women representatives from fishworker organizations.

It was also clear that this situation was problematic as everyone recognized that women were playing active roles within the fishery and the fishing community. At the same time they were at the receiving end of several developments within and outside the fisheries—developments that were negatively affecting their income, livelihood, workload and quality of life. The participant from Sri Lanka, for example, shared how artisanal women processors, mainly women, are being affected by imports of dried tuna from neighbouring countries. As the imports were priced cheaper, local processors are finding it difficult to compete.

That governments in the region have largely failed to recognize the role of women of fishing communities and constructive support their work, was also discussed. To quote from the presentation of a participant from India: “The history of the 100-years of fisheries development in the country is also one of ‘masculinization’ of the sector where, with increasing inflows of technology and outflows of fish, women found themselves at the receiving end, both literally as well as figuratively. A review of the ‘development programmes’ shows a heavy bias against women—in the plethora of programmes that were spawned as part of the modernisation drive, there is hardly one targeting specifically the women in the sector.”

At the meeting, there was discussion on these issues. Nalini Nayak, a resource person from India who has been involved with the fishworker movement at various levels, made a presentation on the women in fisheries. Her presentation critiqued the current model of fisheries development that has marginalized women, destroyed livelihoods and the environment. She highlighted the need for a feminist perspective in fisheries.

A representative from one of the stronger fishworker organization in the region, with a long history of trying to organize women fishworkers, shared the difficulties they still faced in trying to facilitate the genuine representation of women in their organization and in adopting a feminist perspective in their work. Even though these were desirable goals, he said, they were difficult to translate into reality.



Overall, it seemed clear that women of fishing communities within Asia are starting to organize only in a few countries. They have a long way to go yet and special efforts need to be devoted to helping women organize in defense of their livelihoods and communities.

Participants at the meeting called for establishing participatory mechanisms to ensure that all decisions related to the use and management of fisheries resources at the local, national and international level are made in partnership with the fisherfolk.

Above all, participants called for the sustainable and non-destructive management and use of the resources of the lakes, rivers, seas and oceans by all humankind and asserted that the rights of artisanal fishing communities—the guardians of these water bodies—to use, manage and benefit from them, must be protected and accepted.

Finally, participants committed to protecting the rights to life and livelihood of fishing communities and to protecting and conserving aquatic resources, indigenous species and ecosystems, while demonstrating concrete alternatives towards a people-centred development. They also committed to observing the World Food Day on 16 October, the World Fisheries Day on 21 November and the Anti-WTO day on 30 November at

the Asian level with a regionally co-ordinated action by fishing communities to demonstrate their solidarity.

At the end of the workshop, participants formed a follow-through committee (FTC) to take forward some of the issues discussed at the workshop. The plans discussed related to participation of fisherfolk in events related to the World Summit for Social Development to be held in September 2002, research and training on fisheries-related issues, exchange programmes between fisherfolk in the Asian countries, World Fisheries Day celebrations, training for lobby work, and participation at the World Food Summit in June 2002. The report of the workshop is under preparation and should be available by May 2002.

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## Latin America/ Chile

### Labour focus

*This report highlights the poor working conditions in Chile's salmon processing plants*

**By Brian O' Riordan of ICSF's Brussels Office**

In December 2001, ICSF Brussels Office received two reports in Spanish from Estrella Diaz, Chile. For several years Ms. Diaz has been researching and documenting the working conditions of women in fish processing plants. These two reports are a continuation of that work.

The first report is intended to provide the Regional Labour Directorate with proposals for improving its formal interventions in the areas of health and safety—at a time when its management is being modernized, and it is committed to promote equality of opportunity and social equity in the work place.

The second report hopes to contribute to the general improving of working standards for the benefit of the workers, and to improve competitiveness in a framework of socially and ethically responsible business practice.

Both reports provide a wealth of information about the Chilean fish processing industry in general, and the salmon aquaculture industry in particular. Extensive reviews and analysis of working conditions (contracts, physical environment, salaries etc.) and of the evolving national framework for labour policy are provided. Given the high level of international investment in salmon aquaculture in Chile, it is hoped that international standards of health and safety and

internationally accepted working practices will be introduced to Chile. However, it is noted that there are few trade agreements between Chile and other countries that include working conditions. Also, given the fact that significant quantities of salmon are exported to the North, it is hoped that the increasing concerns of Northern consumers that their food be produced under just and equitable conditions will have a positive influence on working conditions in Chile.

Both reports are the result of research carried out in the Xth Region of Chile, where the salmon aquaculture industry is concentrated. In the case of the first report, salmon was by far the main species processed by 16 out of the 23 processing plants studied.

Although salmon was introduced to Chile back in 1905, and salmon aquaculture started in 1914, it was not until the decade of the 1980s that industrial salmon aquaculture began to be developed. The subsequent boom of this form of aquaculture has been phenomenal. In 1979 some 11 million tonnes were harvested, whilst 20 years later, in 1999, the amount harvested had increased to more than 230,188 tonnes. Today Chile is the world's second largest producer of salmon after Norway, and in 2000 it exported 206,254 tonnes valued at US\$ 973 million. Today three main species of salmon are cultivated in Chile, and in 1999 the Xth Region accounted for more than 86 per cent of the national production of these species.

Despite the claims that the booming salmon industry is creating significant employment opportunities, there is much to be done to improve working conditions. About 70-90 per cent of the workers in the processing plants are women. It is noted that Chile's rapid elevation to the world's No 2 salmon producer is due, in no small part, to the "hidden side of its operations"—the low costs of labour. A Chilean investor is quoted as saying that labour standards in the salmon industry are low, even by Chilean standards. This is especially true in the Xth Region.... where many production units take advantage of the high unemployment in the region to reduce their labour costs. As the report shows, there is a dramatic difference between the monthly salaries of Canadian (US\$ 1,435), USA (US\$ 1,400) and Chilean (US\$ 480) workers in the salmon industry.

The low costs of Chilean labour, as compared to other salmon producing countries, has led to accusations of dumping. Comparisons with Norway show that, on average, in Chile salmon production plants employ 20 people. Similar units in Norway employ 5 workers. In Chile labour in the processing industry is far more

important than technology—large numbers of workers are required to produce fillets and to remove bones by hand.

In her report on the salmon processing industry, Ms Diaz reflects that: "The various opinions gathered highlight issues where little progress has been made, but which, in the light of the literature review of international experiences, are highly relevant." She suggests six main areas for further work:

- The improvement of working conditions through social dialogue between the various actors;
- Where workers in different companies carry out similar kinds of work, there may be scope for establishing across the board labour norms for businesses.
- Where there is foreign investment in export production, there may be scope for bringing international political and public relations pressure to bear to improve labour conditions.
- Promoting socially responsible business practices, particularly in an industry with significant forward and backward linkages in the production chain (service providers, concessionaires, sub-contractors etc).
- Use independent certifying agencies that are credible and competent to review working practices in the industry.
- Promote the role of unions in negotiating work contracts where good working practices are a central concern.

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## Europe/ France

### **A piano with two tails...**

*The bourgeoisie of Bigoudennie, France joke about women of fishing families in an attempt to maintain control over the privileges of the elite.*

**by Charles R. Menzies, University of British Columbia. Menzies is an anthropologist who spent a year in the Bigoudennie with his family in the mid 1990s. He has returned several times since. His doctoral dissertation, *Red Flags and Lace Coiffees* describes and analyses the politics of survival amongst family-based fishing enterprises in the Bigoudennie.**

Women from fishing families in France's leading artisanal fishing region, the Bigoudennie, are critical to their families' well-being. Their importance is reflected in local lore by stories in which Bigouden women's

strength of character and ability are legendary. However, there is a second thread of stories, told by the local bourgeoisie, that denigrate the role of women in the fishing family. The contradiction between these two threads of stories is part of the everyday experience of many fisherfolk as they struggle for dignity, respect, and the well-being of their families.

In describing their own work, women from fishing families present detailed accounts of their daily activities which range from preparing food for family members, paying boat bills, and their own paid employment. There is a seriousness to these stories that underscores their importance to the household budgets of fishing families. There is, however, another set of stories about fishermen's wives and Bigouden women that are told by the local bourgeoisie. These stories are similar in that they are reflections on a common social reality—the importance of women in fishing households. They differ, however, in terms of their messages about women.

Stories told by fisherfolk instruct the audience on the importance and valuable role played by fishermen's wives. The stories told by the local bourgeoisie denigrate the importance of fisherfolk women by exoticizing them or ridiculing them through reference to cultural *faux pas* told in the form of a 'joke.' The following is a typical 'joke' told about fishermen's wives by the local bourgeoisie.

*A young fisherman's wife was overheard in a music store in Qumiper.*  
*"I'd like to buy a piano."*  
*"What type of Piano would you like?" said the clerk.*  
*"Well, my neighbour just bought a piano à queue.*  
*I would like a piano à deux queue."*

*Piano à queue* is a grand piano. The literal translation is a piano with a tail. The 'joke' doesn't really work in English. But, the absurdity that the story plays on is that, of course, no grand piano would have two 'tails.' To think, as does the young fisherman's wife, that it is possible, however, to purchase such a piano reveals—according to the storyteller at any rate—the social ignorance of the young woman and her cultural backwardness and, by extension, the backwardness of fisherfolk in general.

Here is another story:

*A young fisherman's wife was ordering new cabinets and shelves for her home.*  
*"How many cabinets and shelves do you need?"*  
*the carpenter asked.*

*"How long was the cabinet Marie-Claire ordered?" the fishermen's wife asks.*

*"Ten feet."*

*"Then I'll have twice that length," she says.*



The ridicule and disdain expressed in the stories of the local Bigouden bourgeoisie is ironic and not a little bit perplexing given that their economic security is largely tied to the economic health of the local fishery. During the last two decades of the twentieth century the growth in the fishery propelled an economic boom in the professional and service sectors. The collapse of fishing incomes in the mid-1990s had a direct spill over effect in all sectors of the Bigouden economy.

Over this same period the local Bigouden bourgeoisie's ability to maintain social distinctions economically was seriously undermined. The new-found wealth of the fishing boom gave fisherfolk the means to purchase the symbols of a cultivated French bourgeois lifestyle. The combined effects of boom and crash left the local bourgeoisie with limited economic ability to enforce class distinctions and, in part, explains their use of storytelling and myth-making in the local arena of class politics.

Ultimately the truth-value of the bourgeois myths is irrelevant. Yes, the myths are wrong. From my research of fisherfolk households during the 1990s it can unambiguously be stated that women have, for over a century, been a critical if not central factor in the economic and social survival of the local artisanal fishery. What is more important here is what these stories have to say about bourgeois culture. The 'truth' of these stories is the revelation of hidden codes of behaviour that are the cultural property of the elite classes.

In telling their tales bourgeois storytellers are attempting to maintain control over the privileges of the elite. Their stories, told in the semi-private safety of bourgeois dinner parties, offer counsel to their listeners on the importance of maintaining social boundaries. Dinner guests share in the laughter, the sociability of the moment knowing that by their presence they are not the objects of the story. Sharing food and stories around a common table reassures the members of this class and reinforces their confidence that their membership in the fraternity of privilege can continue in spite of the incursions of the lower classes. Having lost their supremacy within the local economy the bourgeoisie find solace in their misguided stories of naive and ignorant fishermen's wives.

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## North America/ Canada

### The women make it...

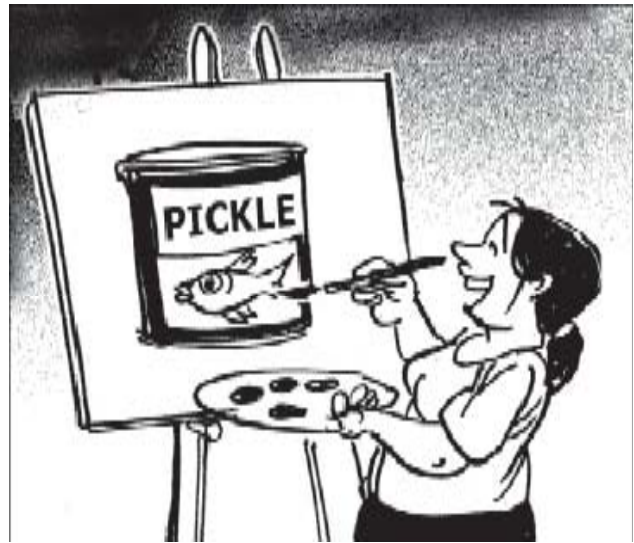
*A good website on Newfoundland fisheries*

An excellent site to visit is titled *Newfoundland and Salt Fisheries: A Digital Exhibition* (<http://collections.ic.gc.ca/fisheries>). An excerpt from the introduction is as follows:

This webpage explores aspects of the long and complex history of how cod was processed in Newfoundland from the 1500s to the 1950s, the everyday work that was required, and the livings that were eked out by many generations of fishing men, women, and children in Newfoundland's and Labrador's many communities and fishing stations. With images, maps, charts, audio, video, and text, we hope to introduce viewers to a world and to ways of life that dominated here into the 1950s.

An interesting article on this website is about the role women played in fish processing in this region. Written by Mark Ferguson, it is titled '*Fish Makers: The Centrality of Women*'.

This article brings out how women were almost entirely in charge of drying pickled fish in many communities on the east coast where it dominated as a method. There was even a saying that: 'The men ketch [sic] it and the women make it'. According to the author: "It seemed as fish moved further away from the water (the domain of men) and onto the land, women became more and more central to the processing."



Some excerpts from this essay are reproduced below:

"Part of the reason that women were the main makers of pickled and other light-salted fish was due to its quick curing in the salting phase. As soon as the caplin scull fishery got underway in late June, men became completely engrossed in catching fish. Pickled fish had to be removed from salt brine and washed and dried three to five days after it was caught. It fell to women then to get this catch washed, out on the flakes, and made all through the busy days of July. More heavily salted fish could stay in bulks and pounds longer, so that it's washing and drying could be seen to later in the summer. This potentially allowed men to take a more active role in the making. But early in the summer, with men heavily engaged on the water almost every day, women made up the shore crews around most of the island. Later on in the summer and into the fall as the fishing slackened off somewhat and there were more days of rough weather, men could and often did play a larger role in the washing and making of fish. However, women clearly did the bulk of this crucial and laborious shore work through the summer and the fall."

"Wilson Hayward described to me one day that the women fish makers in his neighbourhood were very aware of their status and worked hard to produce good looking, good quality fish—the quality of that work defined them on some basic levels in relation to their peers and neighbours. Keeping an orderly, tidy flake, taking good care of the fish day in and day out were all matters that affected personal identity, status and esteem. When I asked him if certain women were known for their fish, he responded immediately—"You know they



were!” When their fish was graded and sold to the merchants, it did not take long for the report of how it had fared to circulate through the neighbourhood. Laura Whiffen asserted that her mother-in-law, Martha, was known to be an excellent fish maker on the Cape. Clearly, fish making was important to fishing women’s sense of their selves in their communities.”

Overall, this website is an excellent and visually attractive presentation of historical aspects of the Newfoundland fishery.

## Australia

### Fishing for women

**A recent report: *Fishing for women: understanding women’s roles in the fishing industry, explores women’s roles in Australian fisheries. Excerpts from the summary of the report...***

This study forms part of a larger research project initiated by the Women’s Industry Network (WIN), a South Australian-based non-government organization for women in the fishing industry, and the Social Sciences Centre of the Bureau of Rural Sciences (BRS). The research deals with women in the commercial fishing industry (sometimes termed the ‘seafood industry’), covering wild catch fisheries and aquaculture.

Specifically, the research is based on the view that women’s roles in the Australian fishing industry are poorly reflected in industry statistics, and women’s contributions to industry output and productivity are poorly recognized. There is far more information available on fisheries’ production and stock assessments than there is on women’s contributions.

The research objectives for the study are to:

- gather information about women involved in the fishing industry
- obtain women’s views about their current and future roles
- identify barriers preventing women from becoming more involved in the industry and what might be done to overcome them.

In addition, a major aim of the study is to seek women’s views about the value of women’s networks and the services these networks need to provide.

These objectives have been achieved by:

- conducting a search of relevant literature
- conducting key informant interviews with 20 people with senior roles or extensive experience in a range of industry sectors (17 women, 3 men)
- sending a mail-back questionnaire to 401 industry women, resulting in a final sample size of 202 respondents
- analyzing interview and questionnaire responses using social science methods.

The two largest work sectors to which questionnaire respondents belonged were the owner-operator category (41.3 per cent of respondents) and government workers, both State and Commonwealth (32.2 per cent). The main work sectors of interviewees were Commonwealth Government (7 interviewees), State Government (5), and non-government organizations (4). Smaller numbers of interviewees and questionnaire respondents came from a range of other work sectors. Interviewees were more ‘elite’ in terms of their formal educational qualifications than questionnaire respondents.

Major findings of the study are:

- industry tasks most commonly carried out by questionnaire respondents fell into the categories mail/correspondence, book-keeping, and attending meetings—more than 50 per cent normally performed these tasks
- respondents with paid roles in the industry earned a median of 26-50 per cent of their family’s income in their industry role
- while most respondents were satisfied with their main industry role, more than half wanted to make some change, and identified obtaining better status or recognition for their industry role as the main change they wanted
- when respondents were asked to indicate the main barriers to them making their desired changes, they identified time commitments/lack of time, lack of money, and lack of training as being most important
- the majority of interviewees (15) believed that women do face barriers in the industry generally – the two major categories they described were practical barriers (time commitments, childcare responsibilities, conditions on boats), and overt discrimination/prejudice from men
- 19 of the 20 interviewees thought there was a role for women’s networks in improving women’s status in the industry, and they identified information exchange and making contact with other women as the major services needed

- 20.6 per cent of respondents were already members of a women's network, and a further 61.6 per cent indicated they might join – the main services wanted overall from networks were providing a forum to meet other industry women, and promoting industry-related training for women.

Specific recommendations for further development of the research are:

- developing a more comprehensive and representative list of women in the industry
- developing basic statistics and data bases about industry women and their work
- identifying in more detail the gender imbalances currently existing in fisheries-related organizations and fisheries decision-making bodies
- undertaking further searches for similar research, particularly on Aboriginal women's fishing practices, both commercial and subsistence
- undertaking more specific studies of women working in specialized sectors of the industry, especially women working in home-based family fishing businesses
- undertaking research on women's ownership of property and property rights in the industry (including gear, vessels, licenses and quotas)
- investigating current health and safety standards for vessels operating in the wild catch sector and the extent to which these deter women from participating more fully
- investigating wider policy implications of the study's findings and developing action plans to address the issues identified.

The report also highlights issues relating to the nature of the fishing industry, especially the wild catch sector, and its popular image. There is a need for it to move away from traditional stereotypes of 'blokes in boats' to a more community and family-based image. Industry women have a major role in achieving this image change. A copy of the document is available from [www.brs.gov.au/social\\_sciences/fishwomen.pdf](http://www.brs.gov.au/social_sciences/fishwomen.pdf)

## North America/ United States

### Lives of wives

*A video on wives of fishermen in Oregon, United States*

A video titled *Family, Business, and Community: The Lives of Fishermen's Wives* offers a perspective on the special nature of the fishing life as lived by four

Oregon women. Working with Oregon Sea Grant and Newport Fishermen's Wives, Women's Coalition for Pacific Fisheries members helped create a documentary video looking at the lives of four fishermen's wives. These women share the uniqueness and the similarities, and the challenges and the joys, of life in a commercial fishing family. The video has already been used as an educational tool in management and educational circles. For more information on how to obtain a copy of this video, go to the [Oregon Sea Grant's publications site](http://seagrant.orst.edu/sgpubs/onlinepubs) (<http://seagrant.orst.edu/sgpubs/onlinepubs>). (D. Bogan and P. Kight. 1998. 18 minutes; color. VHS video purchase \$15 plus \$3.50 postage)

## Asia

### Women in Asian fisheries

*A useful publication that includes papers on women in fisheries from different Asian countries*

The proceedings of the *International Symposium on Women in Asian Fisheries* held during the Fifth Asian Fisheries Forum at Chiang Mai, Thailand in November 1998 are now available. The proceedings have been published by ICLARM. The volume includes the 13 presentations made at the symposium describing regional experiences from countries in the Indo-China region, including Bangladesh, India, the Philippines, Taiwan and Thailand. Discussions at this meeting made it clear that women and children make highly significant but undervalued contributions to fisheries, aquaculture, fish processing, retailing and fisheries sector services. The publication can be downloaded from the ICLARM website ([iclarml@cgiar.org](mailto:iclarml@cgiar.org)).

## ICSF Resources

### Documentation Centre

*ICSF's Documentation Centre (DC) has a variety of resources relevant to women in the fisheries sector*

**By Ramya Rajagopalan of ICSF's Documentation Centre (DC)**

The Documentation Centre (DC) of ICSF was set up in 1998 to gather and disseminate pertinent information in fisheries to artisanal fishworkers, fishworker organizations, policy makers, academics and others. Apart from providing information *per se*, the DC also provides links to other information sources relevant to fisheries, particularly through the ICSF website.

The major themes for documentation include: artisanal fisheries; fisheries management, fishworkers and fishing communities, the role of women in fisheries, fishworker unions and movements, conditions of work, social security; fisheries trade, fishing technology, fish processing techniques and methods, coastal area management, coastal zone issues and fisheries legislation.

The resources available at the centre are classified according to keywords and themes, and these are captured in a database format. The centre has resources in the form of books, documents, journal articles, news clippings and videos. The information we have here is primarily in English. We are trying to develop similar information resources in French, Spanish and Portuguese.

On the theme of women in the fisheries sector, the centre holds, at present about 82 documents. The majority of these focus on women in the fisheries sector in Asia (42). We have fewer documents from Africa (15), South America (3), Europe (5) and Canada (8). Most of these documents are either conference proceedings or papers. Besides this, the centre also has 28 books and 15 articles on this theme from various journals.

We receive a few newsletters that carry information on women in the fisheries, including *Women in fisheries (Information Bulletin)* from the Secretariat of the Pacific Community and *Coastal Community News* brought out by the Coastal Community Network in Canada. Several other journals and newsletters we receive carry occasional articles on this theme.

Relevant video resources of the centre include:

- *Dolls and Dust* is a documentary on the impact of industrial restructuring and globalization on women workers in Sri Lanka, Thailand and South Korea
- *Women and Industrial Fishing* captures the roles of women in fishing activities in Maldives. The language of the video is Dhivehi.
- *The Story of Suja* relates the story of Suja Abraham, a fish processing plant worker in India. It captures the daily reality within the industry.
- *Rising from the Ashes: Gender, Globalization and the Fisheries* is a one-hour video documentary where women from 18 countries discuss vital fishery issues from the perspective of gender and globalization.

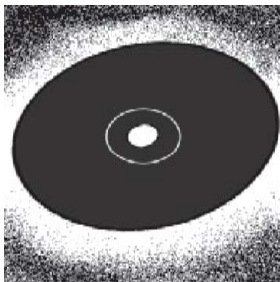
- *Smoke in the Water* highlights the problems and prospects for developing artisanal fish trade in West Africa, a field in which women play vital roles.

Our endeavour is to make the resources we have as accessible as possible. The resources available at the centre can be accessed from the ICSF website using the *Search documentation* button under *Resources* on the Home Page. This facility provides the users with two options: *Quick Search* and *Documentation Search*. The Quick Search option provides a list of keywords that could be used for searching the documents. Some of the keywords that could be useful in a search on women in the fisheries sector include the following: women, processing units, fisheries, fishing communities, gender, small-scale fisheries and fishworkers. You can also search by geographical area, for example Asia, Africa, Europe or Canada. It is possible to use multiple keywords to search documents. The documents can also be searched using the name of the author or the title of the book/ article.



The results of the search provide the title of the document, author, publication details and a short abstract. These documents can be requested by using the option: *add to my list*. This will be received as an email to the centre. The documents can be photocopied and sent, on request. Besides this, users are also welcome to visit the DC in Chennai to access our resources. We are still in the process of building up our resource base and we would appreciate any help you may be able to give us, in terms of relevant documents, articles, videos, photographs, maps, illustrations, charts, posters, audio tapes, CDs and the like.

## ICSF Resources



### Fisheries in Sub-Saharan Africa

An interactive CD produced by ICSF on fisheries in West Africa

ICSF has just brought out an interactive CD, Fisheries in Sub-Saharan Africa.

This provides exhaustive information on socioeconomic factors, fisheries resources, fishing communities and fishworkers, fish processing and trade, regional trade arrangements, regional fishery bodies, legislation pertaining to fisheries, and fishery agreements for 25 countries in the region. The CD contains over 400 documents formatted as PDF, over 250 still images and approximately 10 minutes of video clips, all classified under different heads. The statistical information is provided in the form of interactive maps, graphs and a database (in both printable and saveable format). The CD also contains ICSF reports about workshops in the region, as well as a report of a study on artisanal fish processing and trade in West Africa. Women dominate the fish processing and trading activities in several West African countries. The creativity and dynamism of women in this sector is well known. All these aspects, and more, are captured on the CD. For more details on the CD, please contact [icsf@vsnl.com](mailto:icsf@vsnl.com)

### Like birds uncaged

A video film produced by ICSF focuses on women in Indian fisheries

This 18-minute film explores the role of women fishworkers in selected regions of India. It also explores some of the problems they face in their work and the initiatives they have taken to deal with this. Many of the issues are drawn out through an interview with a woman fish vendor in Kerala, the southernmost state on India's west coast. For more details contact [icsf@vsnl.com](mailto:icsf@vsnl.com)

### Conversations

In the form of a conversation between three supporters of fishworker movements from different parts of the world, this book from ICSF is going to press.

This work is based on a triologue that took place among three socially and politically committed individuals in the winter of October 1999. The three individuals—all members of ICSF—are Aliou Sall from Senegal, Nalini Nayak from India and Michael Belliveau from Canada. All of them have been involved in supporting the fishworker movements in their respective countries.

Though focused on the specific milieu of fisheries, *Conversations* deals with themes that are timeless—power, discipline, intervention, organization, motivation, will. Part oral history, part polemic, part ideology, part philosophy, the triologue takes on the nature of a freewheeling disquisition in search of understanding. Part of the conversation focuses on women in the fisheries sector, in an attempt to arrive at a shared understanding on this issue. For more details about this book, please contact [icsf@vsnl.com](mailto:icsf@vsnl.com)

### YEMAYA

ICSF's Newsletter on Gender and Fisheries

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Please do send us comments and suggestions to make the newsletter more relevant. We would also like names of other people who could be interested in being part of this initiative. We look forward to hearing from you and to receiving regular write-ups for the newsletter.

Writers and potential contributors to YEMAYA, please note that write-ups should be brief, about 500 words. They could deal with issues that are of direct relevance to women and men of fishing communities. They could also focus on recent research or on meetings and workshops that have raised gender issues in fisheries. Also welcome are life stories of women and men of fishing communities working towards a sustainable fishery or for a recognition of their work within the fishery. Please also include a one-line biographical note on the writer.